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FROM : Amembassy LONDON

DATE: June 26, 1969

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SUBJECT : British Press View of Prospects for Progress
at Arms Control Talks

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The enclosed article from the June 23 Guardian by Martin Woollacott reviews history of nuclear arms build-up and discusses the arguments pro and con the ABM, MIRV and ASW systems development and deployment. Vis-a-vis arms control talks Woollacott concludes, "The possibility that these talks could freeze off weapons development at the admittedly stable and simple point they have now reached does not exist. The possibility that the U.S. and the Soviet Union might agree to conduct the coming race with deliberate slowness, and within certain broad limits, does."

The Sunday Times article of June 22 by Henry Brandon discusses a shift in U.S. attitude toward negotiations with the Soviets without demanding a change in Soviet behavior vis-a-vis other outstanding problems. The President's recent press conference statement and apparent acceptance of possible U.S.-Soviet nuclear parity are cited as evidence. This attitude change seen as a good sign for progress on the arms talks.

Enclosures: As stated (2)

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The balance of terror

IN RECENT years the two Super Powers, by a mixture of luck and management, have achieved a comparatively stable balance of terror which the world has come to take almost for granted. Is that balance about to be shattered by the deployment of new weapons systems that will make the race even more expensive and nuclear war more likely?

The most important of the new systems is MIRV (Multiple Independently Targeted Re-Entry Vehicle) which makes it possible to pack up to 10 warheads, each of which can be aimed at a different target, on a single booster rocket. Next in significance are the new generations of ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) systems and of ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) systems—both those born and those yet unborn. Finally there is FOBS (Fractional Orbital Bombardment System), in which a nuclear weapon is put into partial orbit and then brought down on its target.

We are used by now to strings of outlandish initials that represent both technical achievements of a high order and new ways of wasting money on weapons. But there is a strong and vocal group in the United States which is fighting tooth and nail to prevent or limit the deployment of these weapons. The group is centred politically on Senator Edward Kennedy, and its leading scholarly figure is probably Jerome Wiesner, Kennedy's de facto scientific adviser. Opposition, focused originally on ABM, has grown to embrace MIRV: the concurrent development of these two systems is represented as a major threat to peace.

Russia has already deployed a limited ABM system, and the Nixon administration has announced its intention of deploying an altered version of the Johnson Administration's Sentinel ABM system. Congress has given the plan a hard ride so far, but it is expected to go through. The United States is developing MIRV and has designed its new generation of missiles—Minuteman III and Poseidon—specifically to carry MIRV. The Soviet Union last year tested a multiple re-entry vehicle, first step toward its own MIRV.

The arguments of the anti-ABM-MIRV champions are chilling and disturbing. But it is a curious thing that the bulk of the great names in American strategic analysis—Brodie, Wohlstetter, Kissinger, Kahn, Schelling, for example—have either not pronounced on the issue at any length or have indicated that they find MIRV and ABM less than frightening. The greatly respected Bernard Brodie, for instance, could say, dismissively, in a paper published last year that he was not "able to be seriously disturbed" by MIRV and ABM.

Safety in the old nuclear balance

The basis of the current strategic balance has been described both as assured destructive capability and assured vulnerability. Both descriptions are equally apt, the one applying basically to the US and Soviet strategic forces and the other to both sides' cities and populations.

The US retains a large numerical edge over the Soviet Union in delivery vehicles and an even larger one in deliverable warheads—about four to one. The Soviet Union, in the years since Cuba when it possessed only a comparative handful of ICBMs, has massively increased its land based ICBM force toward equality with the US. It seems likely that at this moment the Soviet Union is within 50 or so ICBMs of equalling the US figure of 1,050 and will reach complete equality sometime this year.

The main disparity is in the two sides' bomber and submarine forces. Because each plane can carry perhaps four warheads the American force of about 500 planes represents up to a half of the US superiority in deliverable warheads. But it is qualitatively inferior to a strategic missile force, and obsolescent. The Russians did not have a true intercontinental bomber until 1954, and, apparently, as an act of deliberate policy their long range air force has always been small. Its numbers at the moment some 150 aircraft.

On the evidence of the last Soviet defence budget, the Soviet Union is tapering off her land ICBM growth. But major effort, obviously, is going into the build-up of a Soviet Polaris type force. How fast this build-up is proceeding is not known, but since the Russians tested their first Polaris type missile only last year, there is bound to be a continuing quantitative lag.

No incentive to strike first

On paper, the arithmetic gives the US "strategic superiority"—whatever that is. But in practice, taking into account qualitative differences between weapons and the difference between the two countries as target systems, there is near parity now. Mr McNamara, in his last defence posture statement reckoned that, without major changes in the strategic balance, both sides would inflict about 120 million fatalities on the other if a nuclear war took place in the mid-70s—whether the Soviet Union or the US struck first.

This, of course, is the beauty of the present situation—the total lack of incentive for a first strike, for a surprise attack. One of its principal technical bases is the great programme of site hardening undertaken in the sixties. But hardening has

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Danger from the new MIRVs and ABMs

The MIRV concept represents a technical achievement which was a by-product of New Mexico work on smaller warheads. As many as ten warheads (although the present limit seems to be three or four) are carried by the same booster. They can be released one by one on different targets, the booster changing course and speed between each release. Their obvious advantage is that they multiply offensive power by as many times as the state of the art allows warheads on a single booster, with limited added expense. It is almost a question of ten for the price of one. There is even talk of 12 warheads on one.

There is argument over how accurate and reliable MIRVs are as yet, with the US Defence Department claiming that they are, or soon will be, more accurate and more reliable than single warhead missiles. However that may be their full deployment is clearly just around the corner, unless a ban or limitation agreement intervenes.

FOBS, the other straight offensive development, is generally regarded as the least significant. According to US intelligence estimates, referred to by President Nixon in his recent ABM statement, the Soviet Union is developing FOBS. The advantage of this system is that it can arrive from unexpected directions and that its time in the radar screens is shorter than that of ICBMs. Its disadvantages are its inaccuracy, its cost, its probable unreliability, and the impossibility, under present agreements, of testing it.

There has been no serious question that these two offensive systems, particularly MIRV, can and will work. There has been extensive debate over the effectiveness of ABM systems. Previous generations of US ABM systems, Nike-Zeus and Nike-X, were it seems clear, not deployed at least partially because they were patently inadequate. The other argument used by both the Eisenhower and the Kennedy-Johnson administrations was of course that a simple increase of Soviet offensive capability could cancel their value.

Several recent technical developments have, according to the champions of ABM, altered the picture. The two most important are the development of much-improved radars capable of discriminating against decoys for instance, of improved associated computers, and of very high acceleration interceptor missiles.

The Soviet Union's ICBM force doubled in 1964-5 to 200, grew steadily to over 500 in early 1968 and has nearly doubled in the past 12 months to 900-1,000. The US ICBM force doubled in 1964-6 to 800-900, then climbed to its current figure of 1,050 in 1968. The US SLBM force shows the same build-up pattern, nearly tripling to 544 in 1964-6 and levelling off to 656 thereafter. Soviet SLBMs have remained at around 120 throughout: primitive at the time of Cuba, they remain qualitatively inferior to their US counterparts.

apparently reached its technical apogee. Increases in the accuracy, reliability, and sometimes the power of new generations of ICBMs mean that hardening has become increasingly a losing game. And MIRVs, of course, would make it even more difficult. The answer, for the moment, is to put more and more of one's retaliatory force aboard submarines, and this would not change the character of the present balance.

This balance is the safest thing we have stumbled upon in the two decades of the nuclear arms race. Improvements in command and control and in reliability seem to prove it against accidental war. Its very nature seems to prove it against deliberate war. It can also be seen as the best basis we have had for progress towards reduction of strategic armaments. With all this in its favour, the thought that we may have to abandon it because of new weaponry is obviously highly disturbing.

Priority to protect missile sites

The Sentinel ABM system announced by the Johnson administration toward the end of its tenure would have consisted of batteries of Spartan missiles giving total cover to the US, plus Sprint missiles to defend five or six key radars across the north of the country. Spartan carries a warhead of over a megaton and is designed to intercept at an altitude of up to 300 miles and at ranges of up to 400 miles.

It is widely recognised that, in an attack of any size, many missiles would escape Spartan. In the Johnson plan, Sprint missiles would be disposed to cover radar installations and would deal, or try to deal, with those missiles if they were targeted on or near the installations. Sprint is designed to intercept at ranges of 25-30 miles and carries a warhead in the scores of kilotons.

Sentinel was billed as essentially anti-Chinese, and it was argued that it would be so clearly ineffective against the Russians that they would not bother to react to it. Both arguments were questioned, and it was suggested by some that even the first generation of Chinese ICBMs might be equipped with penetration aids that could swamp the system.

As is well-known, the Nixon administration has up ended Sentinel and called the result Safeguard. Safeguard's prime purpose, according to President Nixon in

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his speech of March 14, is protection of our land based retaliatory forces against a direct attack by the Soviet Union. The secondary purpose now is defence against Chinese attack or "accidental attacks from any source."

Accordingly, Safeguard would differ from Sentinel in that Sprint missiles and radars will be disposed to cover missile sites. In the first phase, two sites in North Dakota and Montana, containing a total of 300 Minutemen, will be protected. Later deployment would cover other sites and the programme, some say, needs only a further twist to its tail to include an eventual deployment to protect the cities.

The existing Soviet ABM system around Moscow probably depends on the same twinning of a long range area defence missile with a short range high acceleration missile as in Sentinel and Safeguard. The equivalent to Spartan is the Galosh solid fuel missile and this may be teamed with the Griffon short range missile.

Suitably, anti-submarine warfare is the area in which it is most difficult to discover what may or may not be happening. But a recent study of the Soviet navy concluded that, unless counter measures were taken—which they undoubtedly will be—Soviet ASW advances would threaten the Polaris-Poseidon fleet by the early seventies. Mr Nixon's Defence Secretary, Melvin Laird, had earlier said that he could not guarantee the invulnerability of the Polaris fleet beyond 1972.

The effectiveness of ASW developments has been questioned as much as or more than ABM developments. In a paper written last year, Dr John P. Craven, chief scientist in the US deep submergence systems project office, said: "It will not be possible to develop area surveillance systems which can track a significant percentage of clandestine systems deployed in the broad ocean."

New force of Russian subs

What this seems to mean is that the only way to destroy a missile submarine force is to station hunter killer subs off all enemy bases and to pick up every missile sub as it leaves base and shadow it until it returns. There is evidence that Russia is developing a formidable force of such hunter killer submarines. But since the requirement for even a moderately successful operation of this kind would be of the order of four killer subs to one ballistic missile sub, we are clearly a long way away from any kind of danger point. The invulnerability of the sea-launched ballistic missile may soon be less than perfect, but it is unlikely to be seriously eroded.

The danger seen in these developments is that they might (not necessarily all in combination) restore first strike capability to one or both of the Super Powers. The kernel of the argument is that one or both of the Super Powers might develop MIRVs to the point where it could use them to destroy the bulk of its adversary's land based force in a pre-emptive attack. If in addition it could hope to destroy a large fraction of the enemy missile submarine fleet, so much the better. If it could then hope to deal with part of the remnants of the enemy strategic forces with its ABM and air defences, the pressure for a first strike could be intense.

To destroy the enemy strategic forces at no cost to oneself still seems an objective impossible of attainment. But in the 1970s there may be significant advantages to a first strike, as various estimates indicate. One such was included in Mr McNamara's defence statement two years ago.

This assumed a massive increase in Soviet offensive forces, extensive damage-limiting efforts by the US (ABM and Civil Defence) to which the Soviets had not reacted by further increases in strategic strength. If the US struck first, in this bit of strategic fiction, it would lose in killed only a third of those it would lose in a Soviet first strike.

Misinterpreting the facts

Mr Laird has also claimed—although it has been suggested that he is misinterpreting the facts—that by 1975 the Russians will have a strategic missile force capable of knocking out 90 per cent of US land based missiles. He has publicly doubted the invulnerability of the Polaris-Poseidon force after 1972. The implication is that the USSR is aiming at a first strike capability. (Of course if the US missile force were equipped with MIRVs, a Soviet first strike would still leave the US with 1,000 warheads from land based missiles; the number they have now.)

The backbone of this forecast Soviet strategic force would be some 500 of the new Soviet missile, the SS-4 each carrying three warheads, plus many more ballistic missile submarines. Russia is reckoned at present to have deployed less

than 100 SS-4s, each with a single 20-25 megaton warhead. Much of the rest of its forces consists of earlier, smaller and less accurate missiles.

But recent leaks by opponents of the Administration's policy who have access to classified information indicate that the Russians do not plan a massive build-up of SS-4s and are not aiming at first strike capability. Nor, in spite of other statements by Mr Laird, are they working to develop and perfect the limited ABM system they have deployed around Moscow.

It is, of course, unlikely that either Russia or the US would sit idly by while the other Super Power achieved any major degree of first strike advantage. The arguments of the anti-ABM MIRV group are to some extent mutually cancelling. You cannot argue that ABM and ASW systems will continue to be ineffective in the foreseeable future and at the same time say that, if they were effective, they would become first strike incentives.

No way to cut the cost

George W. Rathjens, the former director of the systems evaluation division of the US Institute for Defence Analyses, says in a recent paper that "there has been little dispute, certainly little in the American technical community" that there was no technology in sight that "could not be offset by less expensive improvements in adversary capabilities." You might, of course, think that your ABM or ASW was effective or that your opponent's was, or that either might shortly become effective. And this kind of uncertainty clearly could effect the kind of decisions that might lead to war.

The "ifs" and "buts" piling up against the achievement of real first strike capability by one or both sides are in fact formidable. You have to have MIRVs more accurate and reliable than those presently being tested; you have to have an effective ABM system, and perhaps also an ASW system that could work at least reasonably well. The chances of all these things happening or being true during some period of intense crisis seem, perhaps only to an optimistic layman, about as likely as a blizzard was on D-Day.

It is, ultimately, the uncertainty that is seen as the major destabilising factor. The present situation is rather simple and easily grasped. But the figuring and calculation that would have to go into maintaining a balance in the next 10 years, if new weapons systems are deployed, is going to be a factor making for worry, irritation, and misjudgment about proper reactions to weapons developments by the other side, and possibly in crises as well.

A dynamic arms race, though, does not necessarily make for instability in crises. It is possible to counter the argument that uncertainty over weapons effectiveness makes for wrong decisions in crises, perhaps leading to war. A vigorous, rapid-paced arms race is likely to produce a continuing situation in which neither side is ever quite ready for war, in which no particular weapons system is ever fully deployed because another one has been produced by research and development.

Fight to freeze development

The opponents of ABM-MIRV have exaggerated the admitted, but very small, risk that the new systems might make war marginally more likely. They have done so perhaps because of disappointment at the potential loss of what had seemed a fair basis for arms reductions, and also, justifiably, because of the increased expenditure.

They are fighting, too, for something which goes against the grain—a freeze on the technical development of weapons. Albert Wohlstetter, whose famous 1958 article "The Delicate Balance of Terror," underlined the instabilities from technical causes of the then strategic balance, has argued that, whatever one's view of its desirability, any attempt to freeze development is bound to fail.

None of this means that ABM, MIRV, FOBS and new ASW techniques are desirable. Surely, with the possible exception of hard-point ABM defences of land missiles, they are not. But it does mean that they are not as horrifying as their opponents have made out.

What is not disputed is that their appearance brings the prospect of greatly increased spending on strategic forces. Quite apart from the basic cost of new weapons themselves, the assured-destruction principle requires invulnerable weapons in large enough numbers to saturate ABM defences in a second strike. Thus costs increase. The cost effectiveness advantage of the offence over the defence might even disappear. Invulnerable weapons are several times more costly than simple undefended missiles, whether

they are in hardened sites or submarines. The obvious thing about MIRV in this respect is that it brings an advantage only to the attacker. The defender, by fitting MIRVs, adds nothing to the size or complexity of the target system the attacker has to hit.

George Rathjens estimates that, considering only programmes under way or under serious consideration now, the US could "expect annual budgets for strategic forces of between 12 billion dollars and 25 billion dollars," during the early '70s. The social cost would be appreciable; and so would the impact of similar spending on Soviet society. It could delay "changes in Soviet society which are the long-term hope for a more stable, peaceful world." We might say the same of the United States.

Nevertheless, all this must be put into perspective: it is not greatly out of scale with what the US and the USSR have spent on strategic forces before. The strategic budget was more than 2 per cent of the GNP in 1961, although declining to less than 1 per cent by 1967. The cost of a hard-point ABM system, averaged over the period of its useful deployment, would be less than the US was spending annually on air defences in the late fifties. We are not, however, entering a period when expenditure on strategic weapons is, broadly, decreasing. It could now climb to previous high levels and very easily go beyond them.

What hopes from the talks?

But, as some analyst quaintly put it, this is not "a two person game." The Soviet ABM system, which began presumably as US-orientated, is now probably regarded by the Russians as providing protection against the Chinese; and the US system, which began as Chinese-orientated, has now been inverted into a system providing protection against Soviet attack. In this way appreciations of the Chinese danger, whether right or wrong, may fuel the major arms race between the two Super Powers.

What, then, can one hope for from the arms control talks? The nature of the arms control proposals which the Johnson administration had prepared for these talks is known in very broad terms. It included, curiously, no proposals on MIRV, and, on ABM, it suggested only a limit on numbers deployed, rather than on type of deployment (city or hard point) or a total ban.

It is now believed that the Johnson package has been taken apart by the new administration. What is to be put in its place has probably not yet been decided. But there seems no reason why the ABM proposal should not go back in. Ideally we might hope for both a numbers limit and a type of deployment limit, perhaps on the lines of capital city plus major ICBM sites and key radars. The capital city would presumably have to go in because the Russians are unlikely to agree to dismantle their Moscow defences.

A limitation of AMB would be both easier to agree on and easier to enforce than an agreement on MIRV. There need be no difference in the size and shape of an MIRV carrying missile from a single warhead or simple multiple warhead missile. Thus satellite reconnaissance would be almost useless as an inspection device.

What might be hoped for would be an agreement, much more likely tacit than formal, to limit MIRV deployment. On the Soviet side this would be easier to concede (because they are lagging behind) than on the US side. The quid pro quo might be that the Soviet Union could agree to limit or refrain from deployment of land mobile ICBMs.

No spectacular results

There might be some kind of a deal on FOBS. An agreed stabilisation of the land ICBM balance at around 1,000 each—just a formulation of the existing situation—could be a possibility. An agreement to limit deployment of submarine-launched ballistic missiles is not a possibility and is not desirable, since these are presently the most invulnerable of all missiles and therefore reduce first strike incentives. No ASW limitation agreement is likely.

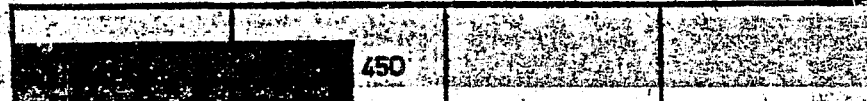
Nobody expects spectacular results from the coming arms control talks. Any agreements, tacit or formal, that might be arrived at or consummated there, could only be agreements on the pace of the arms race of the seventies which we are now poised to begin. The possibility that these talks could freeze off weapons development at the admittedly stable and simple point they have now reached does not exist. The possibility that the US and the Soviet Union might agree to conduct the coming race with deliberate slowness, and within certain broad limits, does. It is a highly desirable possibility.

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US forces black, Soviet forces grey 1962-1963

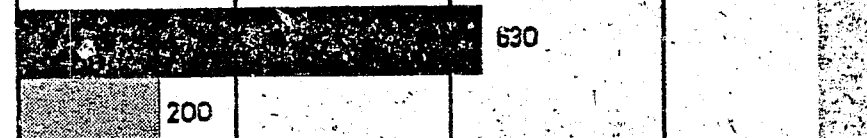
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SEA-LAUNCHED
BALLISTIC MISSILES
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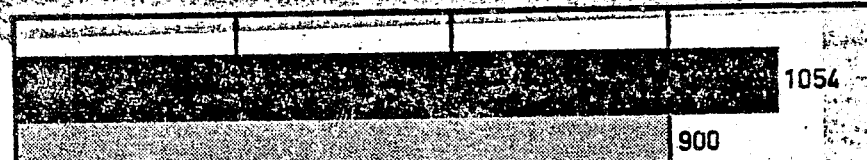
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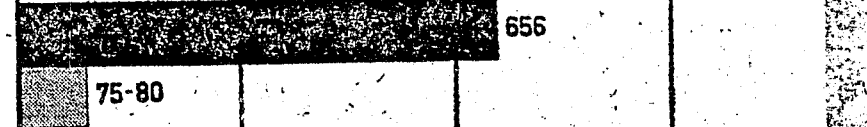
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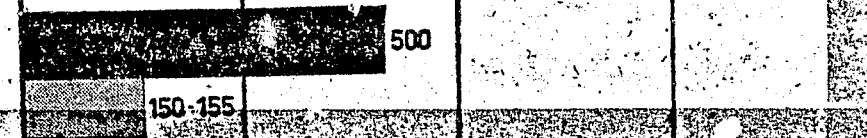
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The Gap That Shows Nixon Is Changing

His Russian Tune

SUNDAY TIMES, June 22, 1969

Washington, Saturday

PRESIDENT NIXON succeeded at this week's Press conference in assuaging some of the growing unrest in the Congress and in the Press when he offered to seek a mutual moratorium on M.I.R.V. testing in the forthcoming strategic nuclear arms control talks with the Soviet Union. But he would have been even more convincing had he presented his proposal as an appeal to the Soviet Union.

Such a mutual moratorium could be agreed on very quickly and time is of the essence for both sides have made great progress in testing M.I.R.V. and, if the arms race is allowed to enter the M.I.R.V. era, it would make it much more difficult to halt it.

M.I.R.V. stands for multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles. They are warheads which carry in their nuclear womb three (Russian) to 12 (American) warheads that can be guided individually to different targets and thus greatly increase the nuclear capacity and the penetrability of the enemy's defences. They also greatly complicate any arms control arrangements because aerial inspection through satellite observation cannot detect the difference between a single and a Mirved warhead. That's why the A.B.M. problem is a mere side issue compared to M.I.R.V.

But perhaps one of the most important changes in President Nixon's attitude toward negotiations with the Soviet Union was reflected in what he failed to say—and he did not fail to say it because he forgot.

Ever since he came to power he has stressed that such negotiations depended on Soviet behaviour and "on progress on other outstanding problems." Earlier this month in his speech on "neo-isolationist trends" in this country, he still linked American acceptance of arms limitations to Soviet acceptance of "other specific moves to reduce tensions around the world."

President Nixon did not make this kind of reservation this week. He has either come to share the view of his Secretary of State, William Rogers, that this is an unrealistic issue or he now considers Russian behaviour, as it relates to the war in Vietnam and to the Middle East negotiations, as correct. Furthermore, Congress and public opinion here now favour negotiations with the Soviet Union. It is not only the international climate that has changed, but also the climate inside the United States. In fact, Mr Nixon may have underrated the latter.

The importance that is being attached to the super-power relationship in this country is striking. Curiously enough, though, this attitude is shared more in the State Department than in the White House. The latter, for instance, takes the promise of consultations with the allies about arms talks very seriously; Secretary Rogers, on the other hand, is much less convinced that they will prove practical as the negotiations proceed and is inclined to give the talks with the Russians overriding priority.

Indicative of the changing American mood is also the fact that the possibility of the United States having to accept nuclear parity with the Soviet Union has not even caused a ripple in Congress.

This week, though, David Packard, the Deputy Secretary of Defence, and the power in the Pentagon, told me in an interview that he had hoped that the U.S. would be able to preserve some sort of nuclear superiority. Nevertheless,

HENRY BRANDON

he believes that an agreement on the limitation of nuclear weapons could be based on the fact that M.I.R.V. and A.B.M. defences on either side would neutralise each other for the Russian M.I.R.Vs are directed against American inter-continental missile sites and their A.B.Ms are built to defend their cities, while US M.I.R.Vs are designed to penetrate the defences of Russian cities and US A.B.Ms are meant to defend missile sites.

If an agreement could be reached to limit the number of A.B.M. missiles, say to 200, then neither side would have a first strike capability—which means that neither side could assume that it would survive such an attack—and it would also limit the number of warheads that could be Mirved.

Melvin Laird, Secretary of Defence, and Richard Helms of the CIA will be testifying on Monday about the differences in their intelligence interpretations. Mr Laird prefers to accept the worst interpretation: the possibility of Russia developing a first strike capability. The intelligence community hedges this interpretation, but it is getting more concerned about Soviet M.I.R.V. development and the Russian SS9 missile whose emplacements after tapering off have suddenly increased. The Russian attitude towards the moratorium offer may well be indicative of how they assess their own progress as compared to that of the United States.

Packard placed the greatest emphasis on the need to wind up the war in Vietnam. He not only thought that it was the catalyst for most of the current domestic upheavals but that it was delaying the administration's ability to cope with its internal problems.

Mr Nixon at his Press conference indicated to everybody's surprise that he hoped to withdraw all American ground troops from Vietnam before the end of 1970 and thus beat the proposal made this week by the former Secretary of Defence, Clark Clifford.

President Nixon has come to use his Press conference as an instrument of diplomacy and policy-making and has excelled in doing so. It is therefore difficult to decide whether this was an act of bravado, of partisan jostling, or planned in advance as Mr Nixon's answers usually are.

As of now he has been trying to combine military pressures with what he thinks is a reasonable political offer which would dilute President Thieu's power, but not dispose of it. It would lead to a political settlement that in his view would reflect the political realities in South Vietnam—namely that the Viet Cong represent only a minority. But if this approach fails, does he have up his sleeve something close to the Clifford plan for withdrawal?

The bureaucracy is confused and scurrying around to find what the President meant, for up to now he has been very careful to avoid any talk about alternatives until his mind is made up.

Did he undermine his own bargaining position and morale in Saigon and did he paint himself into a corner the way Robert McNamara did when he predicted that American troops would be home by Christmas?

Perhaps it was part of the President's strategy to show that he was not only a realist but also a pragmatist.